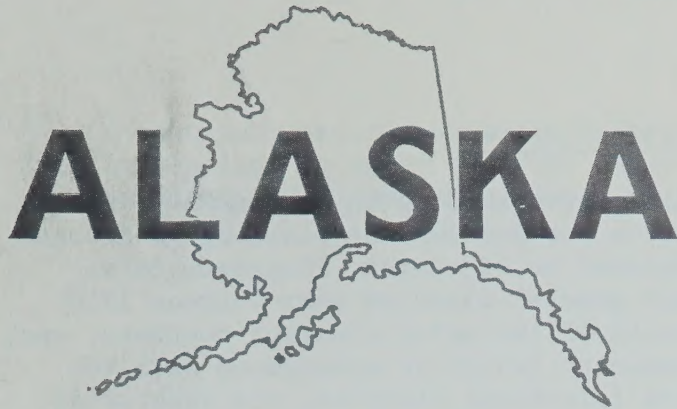


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RESEARCH NOTE NO. G1

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ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR OF ALASKA NATIVE VILLAGES

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Introduction

This Research Note presents data on voting patterns of Alaska Native communities. The data are derived from primary and general election returns published by the office of the Alaska Secretary of State. Although electoral information cannot by itself answer many interesting questions about Native electoral behavior, such as the relationship between religious affiliation and party preference or between party competitiveness and moiety and other intra-village cleavages, it can help answer other important questions about Alaska Native political attitudes and behavior. For example, what is the electoral strength of Alaska Native communities? Has this strength increased significantly in recent years? How stable are the patterns of party preference in successive village elections? Do Native villages bloc vote?

The data below are relevant to these and other critical questions about rural Native political processes. Extensive discussion and interpretation of the figures are beyond the scope of this Research Note. However, the data should have generic application by persons interested in Alaska state politics.

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### Description of Method

Election results from every precinct corresponding to a community identified by the Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska<sup>1</sup> as "predominantly Native" were recorded on IBM cards. Separate cards were made for each precinct in each general election year between 1958 and 1968. In addition to the results of the major election contests, each card contained the name of the community (which is synonymous with the precinct), its state representative (election) district, its senatorial district, the total number of voters in the primary election, preceding the general election, the total number of voters in the general election, and the predominant ethnic composition of the community, which was determined from authoritative ethnographic sources.<sup>2</sup> Information from these cards was transferred to magnetic tape and processed by computer. It should be noted that the resultant data pertain only to rural Native electoral behavior. Omitted from consideration are Native voters who reside in urban areas (Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan, Kodiak and Sitka) and in predominantly non-Native rural towns (Skagway, Cordova, Valdez, Seward, Seldovia, Talkeetna, and elsewhere).<sup>3</sup> Also, it should be noted that most Native villages have some resident non-Natives whose votes are included in the precinct total. In the cases of Dillingham and Bethel, this non-Native population component is sizeable.

### Description of Data

Table 1 shows that 12,097 rural Natives voted in the 1968 general election. This is 4,931 more than voted in the general election a decade earlier, and represents a 69 per cent increase between 1958 and 1968. The number of Eskimo voters almost doubled during this period -- from 4,485 to 8,640 -- while the number of Southeast (Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimpsian) Indian voters stayed relatively constant -- from 1,101 in 1958 to 1,218 in 1968, or an 11 per cent increase. Interior (Athabaskan) Indian voters increased from 1,186 in 1958 to 1,674 in 1968, and Aleut voters increased from 394 in 1958 to 565 in 1968, a 43 per cent and

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<sup>1</sup>Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska, Alaska Natives and the Land (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>Among the works consulted were Aurel Krause, The Tlingit Indians (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1956); C. Osgood, The Distribution of the Northern Athapaskan Indians (Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 7, New Haven, 1936); Wendell H. Oswalt, Alaskan Eskimos (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967).

<sup>3</sup>The Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska estimates that something over 70 per cent of Alaska's Natives live in 178 villages or towns that are predominantly Native -- places where half or more of the residents are Native. Another 25 per cent of Alaska's Natives live in urban centers of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan, Kodiak and Sitka. The remainder live in non-Native towns and in one- or two-family locations. Alaska Natives and the Land, p. 6.

41 per cent increase respectively. The largest turn-out of Eskimo and Interior Indians occurred in 1968. However, the largest turn-out of Aleut and Southeast Indian voters occurred in 1964.

TABLE 1. Total Number of Rural Native Voters

Year	Eskimo	Aleut	Interior Indian	Southeast Indian	Total
1958	4,485	394	1,186	1,101	7,166
1960	4,954	466	1,442	1,197	8,059
1962	7,181	475	1,319	1,174	10,149
1964	6,992	614	1,547	1,233	10,386
1966	7,933	526	1,572	1,115	11,146
1968	8,640	565	1,674	1,218	12,097

Table 2 shows the total number of villages participating in general elections between 1958 and 1968. The number of Aleut, Interior, and Southeast Indian villages participating in elections has remained relatively constant, and, therefore, the increase in voters from these cultural groups noted in Table 1 is attributable to population growth and/or heightened political interest. The sizeable increase in Eskimo



voters noted in Table 1 appears to be largely explained by population growth and the electoral participation of approximately 30 additional Eskimo villages between 1958 and 1968 (the largest single increase in voting Eskimo villages occurred between the 1960 and 1962 elections). Note that 8,640 Eskimos voted from 110 villages in 1968, while 7,181 voted from 102 villages in 1962.

TABLE 2. Total Number of Villages Participating in Elections

Year	Eskimo	Aleut	Interior Indian	Southeast Indian	Total
1958	77	10	29	9	125
1960	74	8	26	9	117
1962	102	11	26	9	148
1964	102	11	27	9	149
1966	112	11	28	9	160
1968	110	10	29	9	158

Table 3 shows rural Native voter turn-out in primary elections as a percentage of general election turnout.<sup>4</sup> No clear trends are visible, although the Southeast Indian figures are significantly below those of the other Native groups, and the years of gubernatorial elections (1962 and 1966) show higher turn-out than years of presidential elections (1964 and 1968). In view of a national turn-out average in primary elections

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<sup>4</sup>Through the 1968 election Alaska did not have a pre-registration requirement, so data are not available on turn-out of registered voters.

of 50 per cent or less of general election turn-out,<sup>5</sup> the figures in Table 3 are notably high. However, a relatively large voter turn-out in primary elections may be typical of Alaska generally; the corresponding figures for the Anchorage election district are 70 per cent (1962), 44 per cent (1964), 84 per cent (1966), and 76 per cent (1968).

TABLE 3. Rural Native Turn-out for Primary Elections

Year	Primary Election Turn-out as a Percentage of General Election Turn-out			
	Eskimo	Aleut	Interior Indian	Southeast Indian
1962*	70	72	72	64
1964	69	61	64	49
1966	78	73	70	60
1968	69	63	68	53

\* 1962 is the first year primary election returns are available for individual precincts.

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<sup>5</sup> See Frank H. Sorauf, Party Politics in America (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), pp. 185-86.

The figures in Table 4 represent the relative strength of the village vote in each of the state's representative and senatorial districts.<sup>6</sup> These figures are drawn from 1968 election returns, and therefore indicate the most recent distribution of village electoral strength.

TABLE 4. Distribution of Rural Native Electoral Strength - 1968

TABLE 4.1. State Representative Districts

Representative Districts		% of Total District Vote
1	Ketchikan-Prince of Wales	11
2	Wrangell-Petersburg	10
3	Sitka	5
4	Juneau	0
5	Lynn Canal-Icy Straits	27
6	Cordova-Valdez	6
7	Palmer-Wasilla-Talkeetna	0
8	Anchorage	0
9	Seward	0
10	Kenai-Cook Inlet	3
11	Kodiak	13
12	Aleutian Islands	77
13	Bristol Bay	100
14	Bethel	100
15	Yukon-Kuskokwim	68
16	Fairbanks-Fort Yukon	4
17	Barrow-Kobuk	100
18	Nome	100
19	Wade-Hampton	100

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<sup>6</sup> Each of the state's 19 election districts is a state representative district. Senatorial districts are comprised of these election districts: senatorial district A is election district 1; B is 2 and 3; C is 4 and 5; D is 6 and 7; E is 8; F is 9 and 10; G is 11 and 12; H is 13 and 15; I is 16; J is 17 and 18; K is 14 and 19. Twenty state senators are elected from the 11 senatorial districts -- one from each except senatorial district E (Anchorage), which elects 7, and senatorial district I (Fairbanks-Fort Yukon), which elects 4. Forty state representatives are elected from the 19 representative districts -- one from each except number 1 (Ketchikan-Prince of Wales), which elects 2, number 4 (Juneau), which elects 2, number 8 (Anchorage), which elects 14, and number 16 (Fairbanks-Fort Yukon), which elects 7.



TABLE 4.2. State Senatorial Districts

Senatorial Districts		% of Total District Vote
A	(election district 1)	11
B	(election districts 2 and 3)	7
C	(election districts 4 and 5)	5
D	(election districts 6 and 7)	3
E	(election district 8)	0
F	(election districts 9 and 10)	2
G	(election districts 11 and 12)	19
H	(election districts 13 and 15)	89
I	(election district 16)	1
J	(election districts 17 and 18)	100
K	(election districts 14 and 19)	100

In representative districts 13, 14, 17, 18, and 19, and senatorial districts J and K, every precinct is classified as a predominantly Native community, although the populations of the largest towns in these districts -- Dillingham, Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, and Barrow -- are from 10 to 40 per cent non-Native. In the remaining election districts, with both Native and non-Native precincts, absentee ballots were included in the district total but could not be assigned to their respective precincts. Therefore, the figures in Table 4 and Table 5 represent correct orders of magnitude of village electoral strength, not absolute measures of it.

Tables 5, 6, and 7 provide a basis for assessing party preference among Alaska Native communities. Election data utilized in these tables are the presidential and congressional elections (3) in 1960; gubernatorial and congressional (3) in 1962; presidential and congressional (2 -- no U.S. Senate election) in 1964; gubernatorial, congressional and state legislative (5) in 1966; and presidential, congressional and state legislative (5) in 1968. State legislative election results were not utilized prior to 1966 because state election districts were redrawn between 1960 and 1962, and state senatorial districts were redrawn between 1964 and 1966.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The number of election districts was reduced from 24 to 19. The previous 24 election districts continue to be used by the state for general statistical purposes.

Table 5 is broken into two sets of tables -- 5.1 to 5.6, and 5.7 to 5.11. The two sets of tables present the same data, but according to different organizational patterns. Tables 5.1 to 5.6 show party preference in the Native villages by election contest. Tables 5.7 to 5.11 show party preference by election year.

The patterns of party preference revealed in Table 5 suggest that village voters do identify with the major political parties to a significant extent.<sup>8</sup> Of the two major parties, the Democratic party is clearly the stronger among rural Native voters. Although this table does not provide direct evidence on the degree of straight or split ticket voting, the regularity of demonstrated party preference in 1960, 1962 and 1964 does suggest indirectly that a large proportion of Native villagers voted straight tickets in those years. Among other things, the data show: many voters defecting to the Republican party in the 1960 presidential election; republican support almost vanishing across the board in the 1964 elections; the otherwise solidly Democratic Aleut villages voting overwhelmingly for a Republican candidate in the 1966 contest for state representative, and these villages again voting Republican in both the presidential and state representative contests two years later; the established pattern of party preference among the Interior Indian villages being disrupted in 1966 by an unusually heavy Democratic vote in the U.S. senatorial contest.

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<sup>8</sup>During the period 1960 to 1968 no candidate identified with a party other than the Democratic and Republican parties drew an appreciable vote.



TABLE 5. Party Preference of Native Communities

TABLES 5.1 - 5.6. - By Electoral Contest

TABLES 5.7 - 5.11. - By Election Year

TABLE 5.1. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in Presidential Elections, 1960, 1964 and 1968

Year	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1960	29	45	8	0	16	10	7	2	60	57
1964	99	3	11	0	24	3	9	0	143	6
1968	68	42	3	7	16	13	6	3	93	65

TABLE 5.2. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in U.S. Senate Elections, 1960, 1962, 1966 and 1968

Year	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1960	57	17	8	0	23	3	9	0	97	20
1962	90	12	11	0	16	10	7	2	124	24
1966	107	5	11	0	26	2	9	0	153	7
1968	92	18	6	4	22	7	9	0	129	29

TABLE 5.3. Number of Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in U.S. House of Representatives Elections, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1966 and 1968

Year	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1960	56	18	8	0	24	4	8	1	94	23
1962	84	18	11	0	16	10	7	2	118	30
1964	93	9	11	0	22	5	9	0	135	14
1966	92	20	10	1	13	15	7	2	122	38
1968	72	38	6	4	10	19	5	4	93	65

TABLE 5.4. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in Gubernatorial Elections, 1962 and 1966

Year	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1962	83	19	10	1	13	13	4	5	110	38
1966	100	12	10	1	13	15	6	3	129	31

TABLE 5.5. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in State Senate Elections, 1966 and 1968

Year	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1966	85	27	10	1	11	17	7	2	113	47
1968	43	25	no election		12	17	1	1	56	43



TABLE 5.6. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in State Representative Elections, 1966 and 1968

Year	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1966	88	24	2	9	12	16	6	3	108	52
1968	79	31	3	7	14	15	7	2	103	55

5.7. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in 1960

Year	Election	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
		Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1960	Presidential	29	45	8	0	16	10	7	2	60	57
1960	U.S. Senate	57	17	8	0	23	3	9	0	97	20
1960	U.S. House Reps.	56	18	8	0	22	4	8	1	94	23

5.8. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in 1962

Year	Election	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
		Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1962	Gubernatorial	83	19	10	1	13	13	4	5	110	38
1962	U.S. Senate	90	12	11	0	16	10	7	2	124	24
1962	U.S. House Reps.	84	18	11	0	16	10	7	2	118	30

5.9. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in 1964

Year	Election	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
		Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1964	Presidential	99	3	11	0	24	3	9	0	143	6
1964	U.S. House Reps.	93	9	11	0	22	5	9	0	135	14

5.10. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in 1966

Year	Election	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
		Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1966	State Rep.	88	24	2	9	12	16	6	3	108	52
1966	Gubenatorial	100	12	10	1	13	15	6	3	129	31
1966	U.S. Senate	107	5	11	0	26	2	9	0	153	7
1966	U.S. House Reps.	92	20	10	1	13	15	7	2	122	38
1966	State Senate	85	27	10	1	11	17	7	2	113	47

5.11. Number of Native Villages Voting Democratic, Republican in 1968

Year	Election	Eskimo		Aleut		Interior Indian		Southeast Indian		Total	
		Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.	Dem.	Rep.
1968	Presidential	68	42	3	7	16	13	6	3	93	65
1968	State Rep.	79	31	3	7	14	15	7	2	103	55
1968	U.S. Senate	92	18	6	4	22	7	9	0	129	29
1968	U.S. House Reps.	72	38	6	4	10	19	5	4	93	65
1968	State Senate	43	25	0	0	12	17	1	1	56	43



Table 6 aggregates the data in Table 5, showing the distribution of party preference in the villages between 1960 and 1968. If the total number of votes for Democratic party candidates exceeded 55 per cent of the total votes cast in the various contests, the village was noted as having a Democratic party preference. If the total number of votes for Democratic party candidates was less than 45 per cent, the village was noted as having a Republican party preference. If the total number of votes for Democratic party candidates fell between 45 and 55 per cent, no clear party preference was established and the village was noted as one in which the major parties were competitive.

TABLE 6. Party Preference in Native Communities - Aggregate

Year	Party	Number of Villages				
		Eskimo	Aleut	Interior Indian	Southeast Indian	Total
1960	Democratic	39	8	19	8	74
	Republican	17	0	3	1	21
	Competitive	18	0	4	0	22
1962	Democratic	79	10	14	6	109
	Republican	12	0	8	2	22
	Competitive	11	1	4	1	17
1964	Democratic	96	11	22	9	138
	Republican	1	0	2	0	3
	Competitive	5	0	3	0	8
1966	Democratic	102	10	10	8	130
	Republican	5	0	12	0	17
	Competitive	5	1	6	1	13
1968	Democratic	78	4	11	5	98
	Republican	20	4	10	1	35
	Competitive	12	2	8	3	25

Table 6 shows clearly the over-all preference for Democratic party candidates in the rural Native precincts. But it also shows that this Democratic preference is not static. In 1968, for example, 60 villages (38 per cent of the total number) registered a Republican or no clear party preference. This compares with 30 such villages (19 per cent of the total number) in 1966, and only 11 such villages (7 per cent of the total number) in 1964. The figures themselves offer no clues to the reasons for this shifting party preference. Party loyalty may, in fact, be very weak in a number of villages; village voters may be influenced by important issues or strong personalities; and/or villages may be receptive to intense local campaign efforts.

Table 7 shows the incidence of Republican party preference. This table suggests that Republican support in Alaska Native communities has no stable base. Of the 54 villages which registered a Republican party preference in the five general elections between 1960 and 1968, 26 did so in only one of those elections. Of the 17 Eskimo villages that indicated a Republican party preference in 1960, only 9 did so again in 1968. According to Table 7, Republican party preference was greatest in 1968.



TABLE 7. Incidence of Republican Preference in Alaska  
Native Villages

TABLE 7.1. Incidence of Republican Preference in Eskimo  
Villages

Eskimo Villages	Years of Republican Party Preference				
	1960	1962	1964	1966	1968
Kokhanok Bay	x	x	x	x	x
Kwigillingok	x				
Nunivak	x	x			x
Anvik	x	x		x	x
Napamute	x				
Stony River	x			x	x
Cape Nome	x				
Shaktolik	x	x			x
Alakanuk	x	x			
Akiak	x				x
Nunapitchuk	x				
Salmon River	x				
Crooked Creek	x	x			
Shageluk	x				x
Noovik	x				
Koyuk	x				x
Shishmaref	x				
Iliamna		x			x
Levelock		x			
Togiak		x			x
Egegik		x			
Pilot Station		x			x
Aleknagik		x			x
Chignik Lagoon				x	
Grayling				x	x
Brevig Mission					x
King Salmon					x
Goodnews					x
Platinum					x
Ohgsenakale					x
Akiachak					x
White Mountain					x

TABLE 7.2. Incidence of Republican Preference in Interior Indian Villages

Interior Indian Villages	Years of Republican Party Preference				
	1960	1962	1964	1966	1968
Huslia	x	x	x	x	x
Venetie	x	x	x	x	x
Koyukuk	x				
Holikachuk		x			
McGrath		x		x	
Ruby		x		x	x
Tanacross		x			
Nulato		x		x	x
Tanana		x		x	x
Manley Hot Spr.				x	
Alatna				x	
Kaltag				x	x
Chalkyitsik				x	x
Minto				x	x
Rampart				x	x
Hughes					x

TABLE 7.3. Incidence of Republican Preference in  
Southeast Indian Villages

Southeast Indian Villages	Years of Republican Party Preference				
	1960	1962	1964	1966	1968
Klukwan	x				
Hydaburg		x			
Kake		x			x

TABLE 7.4. Incidence of Republican Preference in  
Aleut Villages

Aleut Villages	Years of Republican Party Preference				
	1960	1962	1964	1966	1968
King Cove					x
St. George I.					x
Unalaska					x
Nikalski					x



Table 8 breaks down the number of Democratic, Republican, and competitive villages in 1968 by election district. This table shows, for example, that the Native communities in election district number 19 voted solidly Democratic in 1968, while the Native communities of district number 12, 13, and 15 were highly fragmented along party lines.

TABLE 8. Distribution of Party Preference in Election Districts - 1968

Election District	Party	Number of Villages	Election District	Party	Number of Villages
1	Democratic	2	13	Democratic	11
	Republican	0		Republican	7
	Competitive	2		Competitive	2
2	Democratic	0	14	Democratic	18
	Republican	1		Republican	5
	Competitive	0		Competitive	1
3	Democratic	0	15	Democratic	7
	Republican	0		Republican	12
	Competitive	1		Competitive	7
5	Democratic	3	16	Democratic	8
	Republican	0		Republican	2
	Competitive	0		Competitive	1
6	Democratic	1	17	Democratic	13
	Republican	0		Republican	0
	Competitive	1		Competitive	2
10	Democratic	3	18	Democratic	10
	Republican	0		Republican	4
	Competitive	0		Competitive	3
11	Democratic	5	19	Democratic	12
	Republican	0		Republican	0
	Competitive	0		Competitive	0
12	Democratic	5			
	Republican	4			
	Competitive	5			

Table 9 explores further the party preference of predominantly Native communities. In this case the proportions of Democratic votes cast in state-wide general election contests between 1960 and 1968 in Native villages are compared with the state as a whole. The proportion of votes received by candidates of the Democratic party from Native villages considerably exceeds the proportion of votes received by Democratic candidates throughout the state in virtually every one of these election years.

TABLE 9. Village vs. State-wide Election Results  
for State-wide Contests

Year	Contest	% Democratic Vote	
		Village	State-wide
1960	President	51	49
	US Senator	69	63
	US Representative	68	57
1962	Governor	64	52
	US Senator	67	58
	US Representative	65	55
1964	President	83	66
	US Representative	72	52
	*		
1966	Governor	69	48
	US Senator	80	73
	US Representative	65	47
1968	President	56	42
	US Senator	69	60
	US Representative	58	43

\* No election for US Senator in 1964

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